Philosophy for Christian Counselling – PHD803

Team Impact Christian University

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CHAPTER 1 - ASSUMPTIONS

All truth is God's truth, wherever it may be found, but the Scriptures are the only infallible rule for faith and practice. Thus, Scripture must me our foundational authority in counseling. Empirically derived conclusions and observations from the human sciences are useful and necessary, but they must always be subject to the authority of Scripture.

Human beings are created in the image of God, but their relationship to God, to others and their perception of themselves are marred by rebellion against God's authority and His nature.

The root of all emotional and physical disorders (being against or different from God's order) is Adam's sin. The fallenness of all mankind that came through the sin of Adam, along with the ongoing sinfulness of individuals, if left unchecked, negatively and increasingly influences all of our values and behaviors.

People may have disorders which are caused or exacerbated by physiological imbalances. Often the organic aspect of a disorder cannot be corrected by counseling alone, but requires the attention of a medical specialist.

People may have disorders which are caused or exacerbated by satanic powers and oppression.

People my have disorders which are the result of their personal sinful choices. These choices bring spiritual, emotional and intellectual harm to themselves and those around them.

People may have disorders which are the results of the sinful choices of others (e.g. family and society). Yet these disorders may become sinful on the part of an individual if not addressed appropriately.

People may suffer pain or have disorders through no fault of their own. All disorders are contrary to God's original and ultimate purpose for His people. Nevertheless, they are sovereignly used by God for the accomplishment of His will and gracious purposes, among which are the development of godly character, maturity and glory to Himself.

There may be situations in which a person's view of God and his interpersonal relationships are so contaminated that he or she could be hindered from embracing the truths of Christ. In such cases, counseling may be of assistance in the work of evangelism.

In addition to a right relationship with God, the scope of counseling includes aiding people in developing Biblically ordered relationships with themselves and others. Counseling can play a strategic role in discipleship and maturation.

God may choose to work with or without the use of human beings in the healing of individuals.

God may choose to work immediately. He may also bring about healing through the longer-term processes of evangelism, counseling, discipleship, fellowship and other forms of Christian activity.

The modem Christian has access to more knowledge, better material blessings, more disposable time, and more professional help than his predecessors. Yet frequently he is self-indulgent in his focus, confused in his concepts of life, and racked with inner pain.

The large number of books about personal wholeness in Christian bookstores should convince the observer that attempts are being made to solve these problems. But on closer inspection, he will find a lack of consensus. If he knows some theology he will also discern a nontheistic theory and practice, designed to correct human maladjustment, spliced into Biblical concepts. The result is a mixture of conflicting and

often erroneous concepts. Jehovah is wedded to a golden calf.

The language in these books is often that of secular psychology and a culture that gauges life by the degree of pleasure and fulfillment it produces. In counseling, this expectation translates into the goal of helping clients or counselees feel good.

Psychology and counseling, at their core, deal with the nature of man. What a practitioner does is inextricably bound to his system of assumptions. Counseling theory and practice are by nature deeply theological. It is impossible to help people without implementing theological beliefs.

Thus, The Biblical Counselor faces two demands.

First, he must begin with the Word of God and a consistent grammatical, historical, and theological interpretation of it. He must not move from the study of man and his social context back to the Bible. A systematic understanding of the Word of God is his standard, not man and his social context.

Second, his methodology must be consistent with a theological interpretation of man and man's social context. He cannot choose, or allow his counselee to choose, goals-or methods to achieve those goals-that violate Biblical principles.

CHAPTER 2 - THE GOALS OF CHRISTIAN COUNSELING

The goal of Christian counseling is maturity in Christ. Maturity in Christ is being like Christ, submitted to God and His standards in all areas. Maturing believers are characterized by behaviors and attitudes which are in accordance with Biblical standards, influenced, motivated and guided by the Holy Spirit. Significant life experiences, environment and personality makeup are increasingly understood and addressed as the believer matures. Temptation, sinfulness, personal limitations, and life experiences have less and less control and influence as the individual moves toward spiritual maturity. However, as the believer continues to grow to be more like Christ and to have the mind of God, he or she may become more aware of his or her own hidden and continued sinfulness, human frailties, root causes of surface problems, emotional damage, and disorders as well as a need for greater and greater dependence upon god.

Counseling is not an end in itself. Counseling attempts to assist the efforts to free men and women from the ravages of sin and ignorance so that through the power of the Holy Spirit they can embrace God in an intimate way, carry out godly relationships within God's Church and the world, and live an obedient, authentic Christian life according to the principles of Scripture.

CHAPTER 3 - BIBLICAL COUNSELING

Biblical Counseling must be anchored in scripture

We believe that God's Word is authoritative, sufficient, and relevant (Isaiah 55:11; Matthew 4:4; Hebrews 4:12-13). The inspired and inerrant Scriptures, rightly interpreted and carefully applied, offer us God's comprehensive wisdom. We learn to understand who God is, who we are, the problems we face, how people change, and God's provision for that change in the Gospel (John 8:31-32; 10:10; 17:17). No other source of knowledge thoroughly equips us to counsel in ways that transform the human heart (Psalm 19:7-14; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3). Other systems of counseling aim for other goals and assume a different dynamic of change. The wisdom given by God in His Word is distinctive and robust. He comprehensively addresses the sin and suffering of all people in all situations.

Wise counseling is an insightful application of God's all-embracing truth to our complex lives (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6; Philippians 1:9-11). It does not merely collect proof-texts from the Bible. Wise counseling requires ongoing practical theological labor in order to understand Scripture, people, and situations (2 Timothy 2:15). We must continually develop our personal character, case-wise understanding of people, and pastoral skills (Romans 15:14; Colossians 1:28-29).
When we say that Scripture is comprehensive in wisdom, we mean that the Bible makes sense of all things, not that it contains all the information people could ever know about all topics. God's common grace brings many good things to human life. However, common grace cannot save us from our struggles with sin or from the troubles that beset us. Common grace cannot sanctify or cure the soul of all that ails the human condition. We affirm that numerous sources (such as scientific research, organized observations about human behavior, those we counsel, reflection on our own life experience, literature, film, and history) can contribute to our knowledge of people, and many sources can contribute some relief for the troubles of life. However, none can constitute a comprehensive system of counseling principles and practices. When systems of thought and practice claim to prescribe a cure for the human condition, they compete with Christ (Colossians 2:1-15). Scripture alone teaches a perspective and way of looking at life by which we can think biblically about and critically evaluate information and actions from any source (Colossians 2:2-10; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE CENTERED ON CHRIST AND THE GOSPEL

We believe that wise counseling centers on Jesus Christ – His sinless life, death on the cross, burial, resurrection, present reign, and promised return. Through the Gospel, God reveals the depths of sin, the scope of suffering, and the breadth, length, height, and depth of grace. Wise counseling gets to the heart of personal and interpersonal problems by bringing to bear the truth, mercy, and power of Christ's grace (John 1:14). There is no true restoration of the soul and there are no truly God-honoring relationships without understanding the desperate condition we are in without Christ and apart from experiencing the joy of progressive deliverance from that condition through God's mercies.

We point people to a person, Jesus our Redeemer, and not to a program, theory, or experience. We place our trust in the transforming power of the Redeemer as the only hope to change people's hearts, not in any human system of change. People need a personal and dynamic relationship with Jesus, not a system of self-salvation, self-management, or self-actualization (John 14:6). Wise counselors seek to lead struggling, hurting, sinning, and confused people to the hope, resources, strength, and life that are available only in Christ.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE GROUNDED IN SOUND THEOLOGY

We believe that biblical counseling is fundamentally a practical theological discipline because every aspect of life is related to God. God intends that we care for one another in ways that relate human struggles to His person, purposes, promises, and will. Wise counseling arises from a theological way of looking at life – a mindset, a worldview – that informs how we understand people, problems, and solutions. The best biblical counselors are wise, balanced, caring, experienced practical theologians (Philippians 1:9-11).

Biblical counselors relate the Scriptures relevantly to people's lives (Hebrews 3:12-19). All wise counseling understands particular passages and a person's unique life experience within the context of the Bible's larger storyline: God's creation, our fall into sin, His redemptive plan, and the consummation of all things. Thus we engage in person-specific conversations that flow naturally out of a comprehensive biblical theology of life.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE DEPENDENT UPON THE HOLY SPIRIT AND PRAYER

We believe that both genuine change of heart and transformation of lifestyle depend upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-16:16; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18). Biblical counselors know that it is impossible to speak wisely and lovingly to bring about true and lasting change apart from the decisive, compassionate, and convicting work of the Spirit in the counselor and the counselee. We acknowledge the Holy Spirit as the One who illuminates our understanding of the Word and empowers its application in everyday life.

Wise counselors serve in the truth that God reveals and by the strength that God supplies. By the Spirit's work, God receives glory in all the good that takes place in people's lives. Biblical counselors affirm the absolute necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit to guide and empower the counselor, the counselee, and the counseling relationship. Dependent prayer is essential to the work of biblical counseling (Ephesians 6:18-20). Wise counselors humbly request God's intervention and direction, praise God for His work in people's lives, and intercede for people that they would experience genuine life change to the glory of God (Philippians 4:6).

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE DIRECTED TOWARD SANCTIFICATION

We believe that wise counseling should be transformative, change-oriented, and grounded in the doctrine of sanctification (2 Corinthians 3:16-18; Philippians 2:12-13). The lifelong change process begins at salvation (justification, regeneration, redemption, reconciliation) and continues until we see Jesus face-to-face (1 John 3:1-3). The aim of wise counseling is intentional and intensive discipleship. The fruit of wise counseling is spiritually mature people who increasingly reflect Christ (relationally, rationally, volitionally, and emotionally) by enjoying and exalting God and by loving others well and wisely (Galatians 5:22-6:10).

Wise counseling seeks to embrace the Bible's teaching regarding God's role and human responsibility in spiritual growth. God's strength and mercy call for our response of faith and obedience. A comprehensive theology of the spiritual life provides the basis for applying relevant biblical methods of spiritual growth. Biblical counseling helps believers to understand what it means to be in Christ (Romans 6:3-14). It equips them to apply the principles of progressive sanctification through renewing their minds and actions based on Scripture with a motive of love for God and others (Romans 12:1-2).

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE ROOTED IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

We believe that we best reflect the Trinity as we live and grow in community (John 17; Ephesians 4). Sanctification is not a self-improvement project, but a process of learning to love and serve God and others. Wise counseling embeds personal change within God's community – the church – with all God's rich resources of corporate and interpersonal means of grace (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). We believe that the church should be both the center and the sender of Gospel-centered counseling (Romans 15:14).

By example and exhortation the New Testament commends the personal, face-to-face, one-another ministry of the Word – whether in one-to-one or small group relationships (Hebrews 3:12-19; 10:19-25). God calls the church to mutual wise counseling just as He calls the church to public ministries of the Word in preaching, teaching, worship, and observing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. God desires His people to love and serve each other by speaking His truth in love to one another (Ephesians 4:15-16). The primary and fullest expression of counseling ministry is meant to occur in local church communities where pastors effectively shepherd souls while equipping and overseeing diverse forms of every-member ministry (Ephesians 4:11-14). Other likeminded counseling institutions and organizations

are beneficial insofar as they serve alongside the church, encourage Christians to counsel biblically, and purpose to impact the world for Christ.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE FOUNDED IN LOVE

We believe that Christ's incarnation is not just the basis for care, but also the model for how we care (Hebrews 4:14-16; John 13:34-35). We seek to enter into a person's story, listening well, expressing thoughtful love, and engaging the person with compassion (1 Thessalonians 2:8). The wise and loving personal ministry of the Word takes many appropriate forms, from caring comfort to loving rebuke, from careful listening to relevant scriptural exploration, all while building trusting, authentic relationships (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15; 1 John 4:7-21).

Wise counseling takes into account all that people experience (desires, thoughts, goals, actions, words, emotions, struggles, situational pressure, physical suffering, abuse, injustice, etc.) All of human experience is the context for understanding how God's Word relates to life. Such awareness not only shapes the content of counseling, but also shapes the way counselors interact so that everything said is constructive, according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to the hearer (Ephesians 4:29).

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE ATTENTIVE TO HEART ISSUES

We believe that human behavior is tied to thoughts, intentions, and affections of the heart. All our actions arise from hearts that are worshipping either God or something else, therefore we emphasize the importance of the heart and address the inner person. God fully understands and rightly weighs who we are, what we do, and why we do it. While we cannot completely understand a person's heart (even our own), God's Word reveals and penetrates the heart's core beliefs and intentions (Hebrews 4:12-13).

Wise counseling seeks to address both the inward and outward aspects of human life to bring thorough and lasting change into the image of Christ. The Bible is clear that human behavior is not mechanical, but grows out of a heart that desires, longs, thinks, chooses, and feels in ways that are oriented either toward or against Christ. Wise counsel appropriately focuses on the vertical and the horizontal dimensions, on the inner and the outer person, on observable behavior and underlying issues of the heart (Matthew 23:23-28). Biblical counselors work to help struggling people to learn wisdom; to love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength; to love one's neighbor as oneself; and to endure suffering in hope.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE COMPREHENSIVE IN UNDERSTANDING

We believe that biblical counseling should focus on the full range of human nature created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28). A comprehensive biblical understanding sees human beings as relational (spiritual and social), rational, volitional, emotional, and physical. Wise counseling takes the whole person seriously in his or her whole life context. It helps people to embrace all of life face-to-face with Christ so they become more like Christ in their relationships, thoughts, motivations, behaviors, and emotions.

We recognize the complexity of the relationship between the body and soul (Genesis 2:7). Because of this, we seek to remain sensitive to physical factors and organic issues that affect people's lives. In our desire to help people comprehensively, we seek to apply God's Word to people's lives amid bodily strengths and weaknesses. We encourage a thorough assessment and sound treatment for any suspected physical problems.

We recognize the complexity of the connection between people and their social environment. Thus we seek to remain sensitive to the impact of suffering and of the great variety of significant social-cultural factors (1 Peter 3:8-22). In our desire to help people comprehensively, we seek to apply God's Word to people's lives amid both positive and negative social experiences. We encourage people to seek appropriate practical aid when their problems have a component that involves education, work life, finances, legal matters, criminality (either as a victim or a perpetrator), and other social matters.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE THOROUGH IN CARE

We believe that God's Word is profitable for dealing thoroughly with the evils we suffer as well as with the sins we commit. Since struggling people usually experience some combination of besetting sin and personal suffering, wise counselors seek to discern the differences and connections between sin and suffering, and to minister appropriately to both (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

Biblical counseling addresses suffering and engages sufferers in many compassionate ways. It offers God's encouragement, comfort, and hope for the hurting (Romans 8:17-18; 2 Corinthians 1:3-8). It encourages mercy ministry (Acts 6:1-7) and seeks to promote justice. Biblical counseling addresses sin and engages sinners in numerous caring ways. It offers God's confrontation of sins, encourages repentance of sins, presents God's gracious forgiveness in Christ, and shares God's powerful path for progressive victory over sin (1 John 1:8-2:2; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; Colossians 3:1-17; 2 Timothy 2:24-26).

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE PRACTICAL AND RELEVANT

We believe that a commitment to the sufficiency of God's Word results in counseling that demonstrates the relevancy of God's Word. Biblical counseling offers a practical approach to daily life that is uniquely effective in the real world where people live and relate (1 John 3:11-24). By instruction and example, the Bible teaches foundational methodological principles for wise interaction and intervention (Acts 20:26-37; Galatians 6:1-5; Colossians 1:24-2:1).

Within the Bible's overall guidelines for the personal ministry of the Word, there is room for a variety of practical methods of change, all anchored in applying scriptural truth to people's lives and relationships. The Bible calls us to use wise methods that minister in Christ-centered ways to the unique life situations of specific people (Proverbs 15:23; 25:11). We are to speak what is helpful for building others up according to the need of the moment, that it may benefit those who listen (Ephesians 4:29).

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE ORIENTED TOWARD OUTREACH

We believe that Christianity is missionary-minded by its very nature. Biblical counseling should be a powerful evangelistic and apologetic force in our world. We want to bring the good news of Jesus and His Word to the world that only God can redeem. We seek to speak in relevant ways to Christians and non-Christians, to draw them to the Savior and the distinctive wisdom that comes only from His Word (Titus 2:10-15).

We want to present the claims, mercies, hope, and relevance of Christ in a positive, loving, Christ-like spirit (1 Peter 3:15). We seek to engage the broad spectrum of counseling models and approaches. We want to affirm what is biblical and wise. Where we believe models and methods fall short of Christ's call, we want to critique clearly and charitably. When interacting with people with whom we differ, we want to communicate in ways that are respectful, firm, gracious, fair-minded, and clear. When we perceive error, we want to humbly point people forward toward the way of truth so that we all become truer, wiser, more loving counselors. We want to listen well to those who disagree with us, and learn from their critiques. Our mission to spread the truth and fame of Jesus Christ includes a desire that all counselors appreciate and embrace the beauty of a Christ-centered and Word-based approach to people, problems, and solutions.

UNITY IN TRUTH AND LOVE

We are committed to generating a unified effort among God's people to glorify Christ and multiply disciples through the personal ministry of the Word (Matthew 28:18-20). We trust in Jesus Christ in whom

grace and truth are perfectly joined (John 1:14). We cling to His Word, in which truth and love live in perfect union (Ephesians 4:15; Philippians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:8). We love His Church – living and speaking the truth in love, growing up in Him who is the Head, and building itself up in love as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:15-16).

We desire to encourage this unity in truth and love through a fresh vision for biblical counseling. When people ask, "What makes biblical counseling truly biblical?" we unite to affirm:
Biblical counseling occurs whenever and wherever God's people engage in conversations that are anchored in Scripture, centered on Christ and the Gospel, grounded in sound theology, dependent upon the Holy Spirit and prayer, directed toward sanctification, rooted in the life of the church, founded in love, attentive to heart issues, comprehensive in understanding, thorough in care, practical and relevant, and oriented toward outreach.

CHAPTER4 WHAT GOD SAY

Biblical counseling is a necessary part of the Christian life as it seeks to glorify God by acknowledging the absolute sufficiency of the Bible and its relevance to apply to every life situation. Biblical counseling is vastly different from secular counseling, therapy, psychology and psychotherapy and even many forms of so---called Christian psychology because biblical counseling immediately looks to the sufficiency of God's Word—and only God's Word—to decipher the problem, to proffer biblical wisdom to that particular issue, and to provide clear applicational principles to implement so as to produce God---glorifying change resulting in holiness and Chirstlike behavior.

The Scriptures are Totally Sufficient

The Bible unequivocally affirms that "all Scripture is God---breathed and profitable...so that the man of God may be adequate" (2 Tim 3:16---17). The Bible, then, is perfect and can restore the soul (Ps 19:7). The Word of the Lord is upright and can never lead astray (Ps 33:4). Therefore, because God's Word is totally sufficient it has the innate power to convict, confirm, change, and conform into the image of Christ (cf. Heb 4:12). The Apostle Peter even declares that God has granted to His elect precious promises contained in God's Word that gives us everything believers need for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3---4).

The Spirit---Indwelt Christian Has the Ability to Change

The sinner that God graciously calls to Himself in repentance and salvation is given God the Holy Spirit who indwells in him and seals him till eternity (Eph 1:13---14). The Spirit of wisdom enables the elect to have the wisdom from God for life and implementing spiritual gifts within the life and culture of the Church (1 Cor 12:8). Therefore, because the believer has God the Spirit living *in* him, the Christian now has the ability to change to produce holiness (Rom 1:4---5).

The Application of Proper Hermeneutical Principles to Specific Life---Situations

Counseling depends on proper biblical interpretation. Therefore, if the counselor and the counselee properly interprets God's Word with full respect for authorial intent and the meaning of the text using historical---grammatical methods. When that meaning surfaces, the interpreter can then apply that meaning of the text to his own specific situation. In other words, one can apply God's Word to his life only when he has arrived at the proper single---meaning of the text the way the author intended it to be understood.

The Absolute Trust and Dependence on God's Word to Change Hearts and Lives

The Word of God is living and active and is therefore competent to change a life (Heb 4:12). Indeed, Paul noted to the Thessalonian Church that for those who receive the Word of God it will produce change and perform its work in true believers (1 Thess 2:13). Therefore, with a sincere commitment to and application of the Word of God, a believer can and will experience a changed heart resulting in changed behavior (cf. 1 Pet 2:1---2).

A Proper Theological Perspective of the Sin of Man and the Sufficiency Found in Christ

Biblical counseling begins with theological perspectives as the Bible speaks of them.
All human beings are completely corrupt by nature (Eph 2:1---3) and are totally sinful (Rom 3:10---20) and have therefore fallen short of God's infinite worth and glory (Rom 3:23). There is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins (Eccl 7:20; Ps 143:2). Because of man's desperate predicament, only God by His sovereign power can give life spiritually (2 Tim 1:9). When a sinner repents and believes in Christ, the converted man delights in Christ (Ps 37:4) and considers everything else that this world has to offer as rubbish (Phil 3:8). For a Christian, a genuine delighting in Christ and in His glory will effect and result in a life of godliness and holiness (2 Pet 1:5---11).

Biblical Counseling Does Not Seek to Merely Give a Solution to a Problem, It Seeks to get to the Core Sin to Rid It from the Believer's Life and Replace It with Something New.

Sin is rampant and will consume and destroy a life and thrust an unrepentant soul into hell. Therefore, it does no good to add a temporary, quick---fix solution to a sin problem. Sin is a problem of the will, heart, and mind that believers through the power of the Spirit can and must turn away from. The biblical picture is to find the sin problem and cut it off from its roots so it does not spring up again. The language is to put off the old sin issue and put on something new. This then replaces the old sinful pattern with a new Godly pattern (cf. Eph 4:25---32; Col 3:8---14; cf. 1 Pet 2:1---2; Rom 13:12; Heb 12:1).

CHAPTER5 THE NEED FOR CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING

You Can't Seem to Find Enough Time

The Bible is an excellent source for time management. A Biblical counselor can help you to glean time management skills by using principles that are God spoken. Managing your time begins with a proper relationship with God and Jesus Christ.

Your Children are Out of Control

Your family was designed by God. If you find that you are not enjoying the fruit of the womb, you may want to seek Biblical counseling to learn how to raise "family centered children" rather than a "children centered family". Perhaps you have been told your child has ADD, AD/HD or ODD. Maybe your teen has been cutting or is involved with other non-Christian behaviors. If you find this to be true, you may want to seek Biblical counseling.

You can have victory over your bad habits through Jesus Christ

You Are Strug- gling with the Need for Alcohol or Drugs

Sometimes we fall into the sinful habit of using too much alcohol or illegal drugs. The Bible has answers for what causes this type of behavior and you can have victory over your bad habits through Jesus Christ.

You Just Don't Love (Him) or (Her) Anymore

God gave you a spouse and in the beginning things were wonderful, but now you are having trouble "loving" your mate. God's word commands that we should love everyone, even our enemies. This begins with understanding the true meaning of "love". The Bible has an answer for this.

You Are the Victim of Abuse

Our world is full of hatred and evil. If you are the victim of a violent crime such as physical or sexual abuse you should immediately call the authorities. Once the proper authorities have been contacted and you are ready to begin the recovery process Biblical counseling can help.

You are finding it Difficult to interact with the Outside World

You are anxious or fearful to step foot outside of your home. Something has made it so that you are so frightened that interacting with other people is almost impossible for you. The Bible has great answers for how we should deal with anxiety and fear. A Biblical Counselor can guide you through and help you to apply those answers to your circumstance.

You Have Found that Special Someone and You Want to Get Married

Understanding the roles of the husband and wife and God's design for marriage is the best thing you can do ***before*** you tie the knot. Too many marriages begin with false expectations and tragically end in divorce. The Bible is the best place to find God's idea of what a marriage should be.

You Have Just Lost a Loved One to Death

You may feel very alone in your struggle with the grief that you are trying to bear. You are not alone; the Bible is filled with examples of death and how to deal with it. Grief is handled by everyone in various ways, and it is one of the most agonizing emotions that one will deal with in this life. Although a Biblical counselor cannot remove your pain, they can help you deal with the coming days as you learn how to live with your loss.

You find it Hard to Control Your Anger

Anger that is intense and destructive leads to broken relationships, illness and sometimes even death. Learning to deal with the things that make you angry is the best way to resolve this problem. The Bible is a great place to look for Anger Management. A Biblical counselor can help you identify the things that cause you to be sinfully angry. Anger is acceptable, so long as you are not "sinfully angry". The Bible says "be ye angry and sin not" (Ephesians 4:25).

You Have No Desire to Maintain Daily Activity

Every day it gets harder and harder to get out of bed. When you do finally get up at noon or after noon, you find it best to sit in your home in darkness. You have no desire to do the things that need to be done. Getting ready to go to work is a major effort because it seems like there is no joy in anything you do. Maybe you have been diagnosed with Bipolar disorder or manic depression. God promises to give us true joy when we do things His way. Seek Biblical counseling to learn how to get motivated and back on track.

Word as a gift to humanity and so they freely share the Word with others. The counseling

CHAPTER6 - Advantage of Christian Counseling

In a conversation with a medical doctor, he expressed frustration about the number of times he diagnosed significant levels of anxiety or depression only to be told by a patient that her pastor or friend warned against medicine and suggested that her problem was spiritual.

"This kind of five Bible verses and you'll be better approach is far more common than many realize." The doctor said.

He's right. And Christians lose credibility in this area when in reality they have far more to offer. In my conversation with the doctor, I suggested the following perspective:

Perspective on Christian counseling

When I counsel others, I usually begin with an assumption that they have a full line of moral credit. I treat them as individuals who can accept and pay for their debts. Out of basic respect for their dignity as beings made in the image of God, I relate to them as responsible, capable, culpable and accountable.

Yet I realize that life is not so easily reduced to raw choosing. We must guard against a tendency within the Church to make all of life a matter of choice; of obedience or disobedience. We must apply compassionate consideration to how complex life can be. Far too often believers approach people one dimensionally, as if humans were only spiritual beings in need of salvation.

Yet, according to Scripture, there are four dimensions of human life. We are…

1. physical beings with bodily needs.
2. social beings with relationship needs.
3. psychological beings with cognitive needs.
4. spiritual beings with a need for God.

Christian counselors have a unique advantage of being able to approach issues holistically based on these dimensions. I use the word "advantage" because many other disciplines will not consider that spiritual dimension. If we find it inadequate to leave out this dimension (as we should), why do we do the same thing with the other dimensions?

A thorough biblical understanding of humanity protects us from simplistic reductions because we know that God has made humans as physical, social, psychological and spiritual beings. Each of these dimensions must be considered when understanding and counseling behavior.

Unlike other disciplines, Christian counselors do not treat people as products of impersonal chance. Since we know that there is a personal creator, we call people to more than human perspectives about life.

The mistake Christians often make is being overly zealous to offer quick answers for the issues that trouble people. "After all," we're told, "the Bible speaks to every issue of life." "So," it seems to many believers, "all I have to do is find a verse or two of Scripture that applies and share them with the person who asks for advice."

This approach is typically based on careless listening. When we're more interested in our answer than in understanding a person's problem, we need to learn patience by listening more compassionately. We don't want to be the fool who answers a matter before hearing it. And we should always try to ways that the four dimensions might relate.

Some clarification

I am not suggesting that we encourage people to avoid responsibility for their actions. Playing the victim only binds people to more destructive life-patterns. But superficial diagnoses typically lead to inadequate remedies.

When counseling others, for example, it would be horribly simplistic to overlook or minimize the effects of a deeply troubled upbringing. When children (who are intended by God to be lovingly nurtured and brought to maturity under the responsible oversight of parents) are neglected, poorly guided or abused, it profoundly affects their personal lives and relationships.

In many cases, one must look back to better understand the influences that shaped their current approaches to life. Our story is not meant to be one formed in isolation but in a social context — for better or for worse. Each persons story has been significantly shaped by others.

We shouldn't look back to blame, excuse or justify, but to understand and find a clearer plan for change.

What we're saying is that one's sociology (relationships and life circumstances) plays a significant role (by divine intent) in shaping one's overall life. This must be considered by those who counsel the whole person holistically (based on a full biblical perspective of humanity).

Wisdom then calls us to consider a wider perspective of life as we help individuals address their deepest needs. When counseling deeper life issues that hold people in patterns that are not flourishing in God's will, very often a person's social history and context must be explored as part of the diagnosis. This is validated by the fact that a key component to flourishing in a blessed life is our associations or those we are in company with (Psalm 1:1-3).

Another example is the use of medicinal aids for behavior or moods. Many medicines are helpful for addressing actual physical needs but use of them should not preclude responsibility and accountability in seeking resolution to negative behaviors and moods. The need for medicines should temper our approach to people with large doses of compassion and mercy, but only in a context that preserves the dignity of an individual exercising as much responsibility as possible — in a context of truth.

I suggest that counselors and doctors should never view medicinal aids as a *solution* for neurologically based needs. We are more than bodies and brains with physical needs. Other dimensions of our being (spiritual, emotional, social) must receive thoughtful consideration in our battle for health.

There is a tendency among some Christian counselors to react with suspicion toward medicinal aids. This is sometimes a reaction to a common negative posture found in secular psychiatry and bio-psychiatry toward spiritual dimensions of personhood. But we must not allow misguided assumptions (no matter how condescending) to cause knee-jerk reactions among Christian counselors. Nor should we carelessly dismiss research and findings in these fields.

A biblically-based holistic approach to counseling respects all dimensions of personhood created by God in the full context of a narrative of creation, fall, redemption, sanctification and final restoration.

Christian counselors should use the widest possible lens for understanding and addressing human behavior. This provides counselors with a unique advantage for being holistically honest in dealing with human problems.

Christian counselors have a unique advantage of being holistically honest in dealing with human problems. A theologically grounded vision of humanity protects counselors from simplistic reductions. Each dimension of life must be considered when understanding human behavior. And we also take seriously the profound effects of sin on each dimension. Diagnosis and solution that does not take seriously this painful truth will be superficial at best and ultimately harmful.

CHAPTER7 the Importance of Biblical Counseling in Missions

What happens when missionaries are repeatedly faced with illness, kidnappings, difficult teammates and a myriad of unexpected and painful trials? To whom do they turn for help when the Hand of Providence brings a cloud of grief and confusion that momentarily shatters their Christ-centered perspective on the purpose of life and their call to take up their cross? For some, the help is literally just not there; for others, the help they receive only brings more confusion and doubt. Missionaries need bedrock truth to help them bear the storms of overseas life with a faithful perspective. They need more than man's reasoning to bring enduring hope in painful circumstances. They need God's wisdom and instruction along with the work of the Holy Spirit to change and restore their lives. For this reason, biblical counseling is enormously valuable in the context of missions because its main conviction is that Scripture is sufficient to provide great hope and transforming help amidst the most stressful, perplexing, and tragic circumstances. As we will see through the life of Adoniram and Ann Judson, as well as a personal experience, biblical counseling is the only sufficient means to combat the unique and complicated struggles that missionaries face.

The Example of the Judsons

Two hundred years ago, Adoniram Judson and his newly wed wife Ann set sail for Burma to bring the gospel to a people who had never heard the good news of Christ. The Judsons were highly discouraged from going because of the local government's tyranny, the extreme hardships they would face, and the death rate of previous missionaries.[1] Despite these glaring obstacles, Adoniram and Ann set foot on Burmese soil in 1813, determined to obey their God-given call to bring the message of Christ to these people. The constant hardships of illness, imprisonment, and death they were to face were humanly insurmountable. Only God's power in the midst of this kind of suffering could enable Adoniram Judson to translate both Testaments and a dictionary into Burmese. And it is a testament to the goodness and grace of God that faithful servants of Christ as Adoniram, "despised and forsaken by men, a man of sorrow and

acquainted with grief," (Isa 53:3) leave behind lasting and impactful legacies for the kingdom. For his valuable works of translation duly led to the conversion of thousands of Burmese souls and the establishment of churches throughout the region. The lasting effect of these works continues today in spite of limited gospel influence within the country.

The Solid Rock of God's Sovereignty

The Judsons' commitment to God's call for their life was unshakable because they believed that God was sovereignly involved in the eternal fate of the Burmese people as well as their own suffering. After losing their second child, Adoniram and Ann remained confident in both God's sovereignty and his goodness. Ann Judson wrote:

"Our hearts were bound up with this child; we felt he was our earthly all, our only source of innocent recreation in this heathen land. But God saw it was necessary to remind us of our error, and to strip us of our only little all. O, may it not be vain that he has done it. May we so improve it that he will stay his hand and say 'It is enough.'"[2]

Several years later, the Anglo-Burmese war broke out. Suspected of being a spy, Adoniram endured imprisonment while Ann and their daughter fought dysentery and smallpox. By the end of the war, Adoniram had been released. He and his family, though physically weakened, were yet spiritually sustained by God's supernatural grace and goodness amidst tremendous hardship.

A year later in 1826, Ann suffered from a fever that took her life. Two-year-old Maria Judson lived only six months after Ann. Four months later, Adoniram received word that his beloved father had died. At this point, Judson felt like death had prevailed. He had now lost all his original American teammates, his entire family, and a believing Burmese friend. Judson's mind was reeling with deep and difficult questions. Although trying not to lose confidence in the raw truth that he was to deny himself and treasure Christ (Luke 9:23-24, Phil 3:8, Acts 20:24), he wrestled with the meaning and purpose behind the deaths of those he loved so dearly. Enduring the loss of multiple loved ones in such a short time period was a massive test of his faith. He threw himself back into missionary work in an attempt to drown out the grief. However, he found no relief from the deep-seated hurt and troubling questions. Judson fought with his thoughts trying to detect whether his sin of pride and love of praise from others had any bearing at all on all his suffering. Yet, while in the torrent of agony and suffering, God's guiding hand never left Adoniram. For after painful introspection he concluded that through these deaths and the agony that followed, God was teaching him humility and the reality of His sovereignty.[3]

The Trap of Isolation

In late 1827, Judson attempted to deal with his self-diagnosed problems of selfish ambition, pride, self-blame, and guilt, which he assumed had a direct connection with his suffering. He began to study "quietism" and various mystic writers.[4] These writers counseled Judson to ease his anguish with solitary asceticism and meditation. So in October 1828 he built a hut for himself in a remote part of the jungle, calling it the "Hermitage."[5] He wrote to Ann's sisters in America saying,

"I have this day moved into a small cottage, which I have built in the woods, away from the haunts of men. It proves a stormy evening, and the desolation around me accords with the desolate state of my own mind, where grief for the dear departed combines with sorrow for present sin, and my tears flow at the same time over the forsaken grave of my love and over the loathsome sepulcher of my own heart."[6]

Judson's thoughts and beliefs were very much distorted at this point. He was convinced that isolation and self-denial would produce the Lord's favor and give him hope. He even dug a grave in order to contemplate how the body decays. He had hoped that this practice would shed light on how to defeat his fleshly desires and gain victory over his sin. In time, Judson recognized that his actions were ridiculous, yet he continued to seek spiritual peace and favor from God in isolation, removed from the wisdom, accountability, and love of the community of believers. Even during this dark and confusing time, God's grace was clearly evident. He was not only being "watched" and secretly cared for by a local believer, but also had his Bible with him in the jungle and read it almost every day.[7]

A Glimmer of Hope

Nearly two years of isolation passed. Finally Judson received some encouraging news that his brother had become a believer right before his death. God used this news to break into the thick fog of his distorted thinking and bring a glimmer of hope. Judson's heart was newly awakened to God's goodness and sovereignty because of the gracious work of Christ in his brother's life. He clearly began to see that isolation and solitary asceticism were not capable of dealing with his guilt and self-blame.[8] Through this turn of events, Adoniram reaffirmed his faith in God and continued his ministry in Burma. God remained faithful even through his darkest most lonely hours.

God's Word Alone is Effective

Though actual circumstances may differ, Judson's struggle and crisis of faith is often repeated in the lives of missionaries today. Like Judson, they face similar types of pressures of physical, spiritual, and emotional hardships, and must be trained in how to fight the lies and tactics of the enemy. In many assignments, missionaries have few if any fellow believers around them, so out of necessity they battle in isolation. But the Scriptures equip and command believers to effectively counsel others who are in great affliction, distress, and despair. God's word alone is powerful and sufficient to provide wisdom and help for the multitude of situations missionaries encounter. And no matter how far removed from other

believers, every Christian has God's great promises and directives in the Bible, which give hope and victory in the face of significant hardships. Through Scripture, God has equipped every believer to apply specifically and aggressively his truth to what is going on inside a person's heart as well as their outward circumstances (2 Pet 1:3-4). Far too easily the general, emotions-centered, therapeutic jargon gets lost in the pain. In his word God has given us the tools we need to aggressively and directly address the practical hardships that every believer will face.

A Responsibility to Care

Not only are the necessary tools in place, but the church and supporting agencies also have a direct responsibility to care for these dear missionaries, not only through prayer and financial support, but also by ministering the word to them in a specific way to their specific circumstances and needs. They must come alongside to encourage, build up and strengthen them. For, "Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel" (Prov. 27:9). The sponsoring churches and sending agencies must recognize their responsibility and institute programs accordingly so that every missionary is cared for effectively and individually.

A calling for all believers. While the institutions bear a significant responsibility, according to Scripture, counseling is a duty for all believers (Acts 20:20, 31-32) and especially for leaders who oversee those in ministry. Missionaries should be able to counsel one another on the field, as well as receive help from home church members and sending agencies. Unfortunately, this lasting help will not happen unless we embrace the sufficiency of Scripture and equip believers, church leaders, and missionaries to minister God's Word into very difficult circumstances.[9] We must believe that the Bible is sufficient to both meet the needs of the one who is hurting and also equip all the saints to care for the hurts and needs of others.

The daily necessity of the Gospel. The Bible teaches that ministering the Word to individual's unique circumstances, heart responses, and thinking is not to be limited to those who have intense and complex problems, but it is a daily need for all believers. We all need to be reminded how the gospel and other biblical truth relates and applies to our lives and circumstances every day (1 Thess 4:18, 5:11; Rom 15:14; Col 3:13; and James 5:16).[10] For believers and missionaries, it is necessary and important to receive humble and loving counsel from God's Word regularly. For the Word is powerful to give life, adequate to instruct, able to revive the soul (2 Tim 3:16; Ps 19:7-8), and sufficient to prepare us to weather life's storms.

The importance of counsel on the mission field. Since the mission field is often riddled with its own set of storms, it is especially important for missionaries to receive biblical counsel as they seek to minister to others. Counsel is only as valuable as it is "biblical" or "true," and it is only effective when it is bathed in prayer. Due to the complex and often differing situations of missionaries, the counsel they receive must be

specifically relevant and specifically applied to the individual's specific circumstances. Persecution, hardships, and pain are especially prevalent among missionaries. We, therefore, must respond to the dire need with counseling steeped in Scripture and individually tailored to meet the unique circumstances of each missionary.

Defining Biblical Counseling

Up to this point we have seen the necessity of biblical counseling in the life of every believer. But before we can continue, it is necessary to make sure we are on the same page in our use of foundational vocabulary. Since the word counseling can have different connotations in our culture today, it is important to define what is meant when we use the term "biblical counseling."

First and foremost, the Bible is clear that counseling is primarily to be administered in discipleship community in the context of the local church; biblical counseling is neither independent from the church nor done apart from discipleship (Eph 4:14-16; Col 1:28). It incorporates the community of believers by establishing relationships and providing resources for every Christian to bless and encourage weak and needy believers (Col 1:28-29, 3:16). Biblical counseling emphasizes reliance on the Word of God as sufficient to bring understanding and give help and hope to people with relational, emotional, mental, and behavioral problems (Rom 15:4-5, 13). It is also not based on man's reasoning or opinion, but solely founded on God's Word. Biblical counseling does not ignore true medical issues, but works diligently to see the person as a whole (1 Tim 5:23; Ps 32:3-4). It is neither insensitive nor uncaring (Acts 20:31; 1 Thess 2:7-12). But rather, in love, uses God's Word, by the Holy Spirit, to appropriate truth to a person's desires, thoughts, and behavior (Rom 12:1-2; Eph 4; 2 Peter 1:3). Biblical counseling does not focus solely on behavioral issues or circumstances (Prov 4:23; Mark 7:21ff), but deals with one's sins or trials by strategically helping them connect and apply the truths and promises of the gospel to their lives (Prov 18:13; 2 Pet 1:3-4). It equips a person with tools to live out God's commands by grace through faith (2 Cor 10:5; Col 3; Eph 4). This counsel focuses on the gospel, and seeks to put these Christ-centered truths into action. Finally, it should be fully realized that the ultimate goal is to give God glory through sanctifying the believer and strengthening the church (John 17:17-19).[11]

In summary, biblical counseling is discipleship counseling. Too often discipleship is seen as simply teaching a new believer the fundamentals of faith in Christ. However, the Bible clearly commands consistent personal involvement in each other's lives in order to bring God's Word to bear on specific life issues. The "Great Commission" in Matthew 28:18-20 says that we are to baptize and teach others to observe (keep or live out) all that He commanded. The church has neglected this essential directive and presumed that those who are familiar with the Bible know how to apply it to every aspect of their lives (Deut 6:1-3; Eph 4:11-16). Biblical counseling in its truest sense is coming alongside another with comfort and instruction from Scripture, helping a person cultivate an understanding of how the gospel of Christ

Jesus addresses every aspect of life. This way of discipleship counseling teaches a person how to live for God's glory.

Discipleship counseling is also multiplicative. We must disciple in view of equipping leaders to then counsel others. As a believer effectively applies God's word to his own life, he is then able to pour out God's principles, promises, and gospel application into other people's lives. In this type of intense discipleship, leaders are more adequately prepared and equipped so that they may in turn counsel, prepare, and equip others. Discipleship counseling establishes a system in which the gospel of Christ is effectively advancing and where leaders are consistently trained and commissioned to train others.

A Lesson from the Judsons

In order to see the value of biblical counseling for missionaries, and by extension those whom they disciple, it is beneficial to examine Judson's response to trials as a practical example of how God's word is effective and powerful to give help and hope. It is also beneficial to examine how the body of Christ can be God's helpful instrument to speak his truth in love and to bring clarity, encouragement, and hope to missionaries in times of need. Looking at Judson's circumstances through the lens of biblical counseling can serve as a catalyst for learning how to glorify God in the midst of significant hardships.

Hope from God's Promises

First, Judson needed hope from God's precious promises (2 Pet 1:3). Recalling promises in trials can keep the heart and mind attuned to who God is and what He is doing. Judson needed to believe specific promises related to his situation. For example, God never leaves or forsakes his own (Heb 13:5). God is for us because of Christ and not against us (Rom 8:31-39). God is faithful to make all questions clear in time as we choose to abide in him and trust what he has allowed (Ps 31:14-15, 62:5-8). God hears the righteous cry for help and delivers them out of affliction (Ps 34:15-19). God will strengthen, help, and carry his people through (Is 41:10; Ps 59:16). And God will "take us by the hand and keep us" (Is 42:6). The faithfulness and goodness of God can easily grow dim if the difficulty or trial gains the greater focus. Keeping a biblical perspective of God through meditating on his promises and purposes will enable missionaries to hold fast to hope during trials.

Progressive Sanctification

Secondly, Judson's misguided belief on sanctification was the root issue in his painful isolation. From the moment of his conversion, Judson had been zealous to attain "perfect sanctification."[12] This zeal motivated him to compile a list of resolutions. On this list he wrote "believe in the doctrine of perfect sanctification attainable in this life."[13] It is no surprise from this belief that Judson tried to deal with his sin by practicing self-denial and solitary asceticism. Scripture says: "Have nothing to do with irreverent silly myths. Rather

train yourself for Godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance" (1 Tim 4:7-9). Judson had half of God's truth correct. He valued godliness, but his method to attain to that godliness was based on a belief contrary to Scripture. God's word teaches that sanctification is progressive in this life and perfection is only reached in the day of Christ (Phil 1:6, 2:12; 1 Thess 5:23-24). We cannot attain perfection in this life as Judson thought, but are being made into Christ's image as we mortify habitual sin by calling on the power of the Holy Spirit for help to apply God's principles of change. Without utilizing the Spirit's help, a believer is rendered helpless to fight. Judson could not and was not meant to fight his fleshly motives by any other means.

Wrong View of Scripture

Thirdly, two important principles in Scripture need to be examined with regard to how Judson responded to his circumstance by isolation. In turning to the counsel of quietist and mystic writers, he opened his vulnerable heart to be influenced in a way contrary to Scripture. We can learn from Judson's life the need for community and a strong understanding of God's grace in times of hardship and pain.

Need for community.

God's word consistently points in the opposite way of isolation. "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment" (Prov 18:1). Being in the jungle alone did not bring Judson closer to God as he had hoped; rather it lured him away from "sound judgment" and hearing God's truth—the only true source of comfort and hope. He did have his Bible with him, but his response suggests that Scripture was not his authority to guide him through this trial. Judson desperately needed to stay among other believers and hear them speak God's truth specifically to his situation. His mind was naturally clouded because of his circumstances; therefore it was necessary and biblical to ask for a pair of "fresh eyes" to help him see his thoughts and situation from God's perspective (Prov 11:14, 24:6).

Victory accomplished only through Christ.

God's word also teaches that asceticism of any kind has an appearance of wisdom, but ultimately "has no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh" (Col 2:23). Secular counsel influenced Judson to believe that through deep contemplation he could correct the wrong motivations and thoughts in his heart and mind. On the contrary, God designed that victory over sinful fleshly desires is accomplished in Christ's death and resurrection (Col 2:13-15; 2 Cor 15:57-58). It is because of Christ's ultimate victory that we gain personal victory in mortifying the flesh through actively walking by the power of his Spirit (Rom 8:13; Gal 5:16). The battle over fleshly thoughts, motives, and desires is active, and therefore must not be fought passively as is prescribed in ascetical practices.[14] It is only through an understanding of Christ's victory and an active involvement, empowered by the Spirit, that we find victory over sin.

Taking Every Thought Captive

A fourth lesson to learn from Judson's experience is the importance of the renewal of our mind and taking thoughts captive. Discouragement or despair does not happen automatically. It comes as a result of replaying hopeless, discouraging, untruthful thoughts over and over. Judson's thoughts became so distorted because he replayed in his mind the lies that self-denial was the answer. The Bible commands us to take our thoughts captive (2 Cor 10:5) and to renew the mind (Eph 4:22-24); these commands are not an option. It is important for missionaries to know how to effectively renew the mind. We "take our thoughts captive" practically by capturing heart responses (beliefs, desires, thoughts, and the emotions and actions that follow) and replacing them with God's truth found in his promises and principles. It is a careful process to first examine the heart and mind's responses during trials, emotional struggles, and/or sin. Secondly, to ask for God's help, by the Spirit, to see what thoughts are not truthful or God-glorifying. And finally, to apply specific scriptures to aggressively attack those thoughts in order to finally turn the mind/heart towards Christ and hope and away from ungratefulness, disappointment, and despair. Lies and distorted, hopeless thoughts must be personally exposed and attacked with truth; otherwise, they feed the soul destructive thoughts that eventually lead to hopelessness and death (Jms 1:15). As believers, God's word is our ultimate authority, and therefore we must train ourselves to think according to His word and hope in it rather than our own conclusions or feelings (Phil 4:8-11; 1 Tim 4:7-9). The only other alternative is to run from, try to ignore, or continue in our thoughts, which will eventually lead down the spiral of despair.

A Wrong Understanding of Sin

Lastly, believers may know God's truth, but in times of despair allow adverse circumstances to distort that truth. One of Judson's main distorted thoughts serves as a helpful example. In the midst of suffering he writes, "By taking away all my loved ones, God is punishing me because I had sinful motives and desires in coming to the mission field."[15] Judson knew that God had fully dealt with his punishment for sin with Christ's death. But a wrong theology about trials and the burden of facing the deaths of multiple loved ones led him to the deception that he had done something wrong to merit these losses. This belief, though common, is contrary to what Scripture says about how God deals with sin. It is crucial in these moments to examine thoughts with Scripture and bring God and his Word to bear. "He who trusts in his own heart [thinking, desires, and feelings that follow] is a fool, but he who walks wisely will be delivered" (Prov 28:26 NASB). Also, the Bible teaches us that God does not keep a record of wrong (Ps 130), nor does he "repay us according to our sins" (Ps 103:10). And finally Scripture clearly reveals that Christ has taken our punishment. Even though these deaths may have felt like punishment, it was imperative for Judson to go back to the solid truth that God allows suffering to accomplish his will. This is true whether we sin or not. He uses all suffering to establish his purposes, to help us fix our gaze on him, and to grow us in Christ-likeness. With these essential truths, one can glorify the Lord in pain by turning away from using feelings and the circumstance to determine who God is and what He is doing. God can and will provide all the

grace and help needed to walk in full dependence on him. He is enough in our weakness (2 Cor 12:9-10), but we must turn to him and his truth with all of our heart and mind.

A Personal Tragedy

Before finishing college I was accepted to serve in Mexico for two months with four other college students. Our assignment was to help an IMB missionary family with outreach and evangelism in their area. A week into our term, we all went with the family to a nearby beach to celebrate their daughter's birthday. None of us knew the tragedy we would face as we stepped into the ocean that day. In just minutes our fun and playful time turned into a life-changing situation for us all. Before we knew what was happening, the water suddenly became rough and we were caught in an instant undertow. I, along with two other college students, barely made it to shore. However, the missionary father, his oldest daughter, and the two remaining college students drowned that day. The losses were traumatic. Numb and in shock, questions turned in my mind: "How could this happen?" "Why am I alive and they are not?" "How could God allow this to happen?" I could not make sense of things. I knew God was with me, but the pain and shock seemed to overtake his presence.

Inadequacy of Spiritual Advice

I went to Christian counseling with the other two young men who survived. With all of our different perspectives we pieced together the story, but the counsel that we received was centered more on coping with the loss than on God. The counselor told me I was suffering from "survivor guilt," which was common after traumatic events. Instead of looking at Scripture, we talked through our situation and prayed together. These things were good, but they were not enough. I desperately needed to see how God fit into this picture of suffering. I wrestled for a year with God's purpose in these deaths and why he allowed it. I also struggled with fear of the ocean, and began to suppress any memories of that day because I did not know what to do with them. In this situation, biblical counseling would have been more helpful and beneficial. Initially, the counsel I was given about survival guilt made sense. However, it not only encouraged more self-focus, but was an unbiblical concept. I did not need to "feel guilt" because I survived. I needed to look to God who "brings death and makes alive…brings down to the grave and raises up" (1 Sam 2:6). God was not absent that day on the beach as I thought, but he is a God "at hand…and not far away" (Jer 23:23-24). My mind could not wrap around how God could have allowed such disastrous circumstances, but disassociating him from the situation to figure things out was not profitable. I needed to draw him into my life and let his word show me who he was and who he would continue to be.

Turning to the Scripture

In the middle of the pain a friend counseled and encouraged me to read Psalm 71, and I remember drinking in the truth of this passage. God was not ignorant of my pain: "You (God) who have made me see many

troubles and calamities will revive me again" (71:20), I needed to cry out to him like the Psalmist, "O God, be not far from me; O my God, make haste to help me!" (71:12). Most importantly, I needed to hear that though I did not understand why this happened, I must first trust God, knowing that he will bring understanding in his perfect time: "For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth" (71:5). It would have been helpful to have more passages like this to accurately point out the promises and hope I could have in the midst of this trial. I needed to know how to recognize wrong thinking like: "I couldn't control this, and God didn't control this either. How can this be right? I'm so confused and feel so alone, and vulnerable" And then know how to renew my thinking with God's truth by saying: "Lord I thank you that you are in control of my life (and the lives of others) right now even though this seems to have come out of nowhere; nothing catches you off guard (Job 42:2; Is 14:27, 43:13). Thank you that you are good and right in all you do and allow, even though this is confusing and not how I planned or wanted things to go (Ps 119:68,71; 145:17; Prov 20:24). I thank you that there is a very good reason for this if for nothing else than to learn to trust you no matter what, strengthen my faith and/or get my attention out of love (Ps 31:14-15; Rom 8:26-39). Thank you that you are very near to me right now as I call on you in sorrow (Ps 119:28; Is 43:1-3; Jer 23-24). Father, please help me to get my bearings and believe that you are great and powerful and have not stopped working on my behalf (Ps 119:28-30, 145:5), but that you are for me and can help me now (1 Chron 29:11-12). Please help me to believe that you are my only refuge in this time of need (Ps 46:1-2, 55:22). I thank you that things are not really out of control right now and that you will strengthen, help and uphold me (Is 41:10). It will be sin for me to follow my feelings of despair and thoughts because my feelings can be deceptive and full of the enemy's lies (Prov 3:5, 14:12, 28:26). I choose right now to speak truth to my heart and hope in you, my God, waiting patiently in your sustaining, restoring hand (Ps 42). Please help me to remember that you have and are always protecting me from so much (Ps 121:8). Help me to remember that anything that happens, comes through your loving, controlling, steady hand, and will not be harmful to me. You are worthy of my praise and adoration (Ps 145:3; Phil 3:8) for you are good and in control. I submit to this as your plan for me, trusting that you are able to help me handle it."

God's Sovereign Goodness

Though that time of tragedy brought much pain to many people, God worked in and through it. In divine providence, three churches have started and a thousand people have come to know Christ in the very area where God's precious children died on the beach that day. God accomplished his will and purposes during this trial for the good of those involved, the good of others, and for His glory. In times of pain and suffering we as Christians must cling to God's sovereign goodness and proclaim that truly "God works all things for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purposes" (Rom 8:28). And when we do not understand, may we trust him when he proclaims, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:9). God is sovereign, he is good, and he "works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will" (Eph 1:11).

Sanctification Through Suffering

Several years later God led me to a much longer term on the mission field in Central Asia. As a missionary, the pressures of religious intolerance, cultural differences, illness, and language acquisition made life stressful both physically and spiritually. At one point in my term I became very ill and kept losing weight. In my physical weakness I began to doubt. I would ask questions like, "If I can't leave my apartment, how am I supposed to minister the gospel and do what I came to do." Again, I was in a place where I could not see out of my situation. I knew God was in control, but did not understand why he would allow this pain to happen. I responded with anxious and frustrated thoughts. Because I did not understand how to "take my thoughts captive," those anxious thoughts continued to flourish and grow.

Looking back, I see my circumstances from a different perspective. My mind was clouded with wrong thinking and a wrong perspective of God. My roommate helped me to sift through my thoughts with God's truth, dispelling some of the lies I did not recognize I was believing. However, it was still a test of faith to believe these biblical truths. Personally, I did not want things to be so hard or to feel so weak. But God in his omniscience had much more in mind. His plan included not only the effective spread of his Gospel, but also my sanctification. By his grace I learned to persevere and grow in my faith. God used my weakness to humble me and show himself strong. He taught me dependence on him, his goodness, power, glory, grace, and love. A stark reality hit me. I had knowledge about God and his truth, but often failed in applying that knowledge. I needed to discipline myself to cease replaying doubtful and deceitful thoughts and actively replace them with the truth of God's goodness and sovereignty. God used pain and hardships during this time in my life to grow my humility and dependence on him and ultimately make me more into the image of Christ.

Practical Application of Scripture

Since my time on the mission field, training in biblical counseling has helped me see the glorious truths in the gospel and how to apply them to everyday life. I wish I had then the perspective and training I have today. I know I could have handled those difficulties in a way that glorified my God more fully, exercising faith in my thoughts and actions. It would have been helpful for someone, in a discipleship-based relationship, to lovingly confront me about my anxiety and frustration, much of which I did not even see in my heart. I wanted to think biblically, but needed someone to come alongside me, speak the truth in love, point out the wrong thoughts and help me to replace them with ones that were truthful, hopeful, thankful, and God glorifying. I also needed to learn not to be persuaded and controlled by my feelings, but instead to abide in God's truth and be driven by faith in him as my Father. I, as every other Christ follower, needed a community of believers to walk with me, helping me to expose sin and apply God's truth to my circumstances.

The Necessity of Biblical Counseling

Complications from the Extra-biblical Approach

For a long time a much different counseling method has been dominant on the mission field. Many missionaries have received counsel that often sounds biblical, but has a subtle blend of secular theory and extra-biblical guidance. Instead of recognizing the power of God's Word as adequate to address every aspect of life, this inclusion of secular reasoning has often diminished clear biblical help concerning God's sovereignty and goodness over all his creation. It often intertwines the word of God (the wisdom of God) with secular psychology (the wisdom of man).[16] By this integration, it has failed to see the vital necessity of piercing the inner thoughts and the turmoil of a person's heart and mind with God's truth (Heb 4:12). As a result, this compromise has caused confusion and doubt about the authority of God's word and its relevance and effectiveness to impact and bring lasting hope and change in the life of a believer. This misguided approach has had a profound effect on the spiritual well being of missionaries and even those they lead to Christ. We must seek to reinstitute the vital practical of biblical counseling and bring Christians (and missions) back to a full reliance on the sufficiency of Scripture and God's power to transform and restore lives.

God's Unchanging Design of Biblical Counseling

As one who has experienced the frontline where our missionaries engage in spiritual battle, my plea is for an undiluted use of biblical counseling for those who are serving as faithful soldiers in God's kingdom. Whatever the circumstance you face this hour and whatever troubles or pain lie ahead, you can have a sure and unshakable confidence in the Word of God. The sufficiency of God's word is like a perpetual fountain springing from the treasury of God's divine excellencies, for it is consistently faithful to provide infinitely refreshing counsel and eternal comfort to those who are in the darkest trials. Biblical counseling is a voice that invites believers to drink at this fountain of hope. Such immersion in the Living Water leaves them satisfied with a deeper understanding of who God is in the midst of their problems. This was God's perfect design for the Judsons 300 years ago, for myself 10 years ago, and should continue to be for all God's children who choose to take him at his Word.

CHAPTER 8 Making Christian Counseling Christ-Centered

Today, we may more accurately describe much that goes on under the rubric of Christian counseling as counseling done by Christian psychologists and professionally trained counselors. Usually, these are well-educated professionals with excellent counseling techniques and rich counseling experience. They often do their counseling in churches or church-related settings. Unfortunately, this is how some people define Christian counseling.

In many instances, however, there is an obvious hiatus between the Christian faith of these counselors and their counseling practice. They may be devout Christians and excellent counselors, but there is little about their counseling that is uniquely Christian. They have tightly compartmentalized their counseling practice from their personal faith. What is missing in these cases is a vital integration of these two aspects of their practice.

HOW DOES ONE ACHIEVE AN INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND COUNSELING?

First, to make counseling truly Christian we must bring our faith and our counseling together in our mind. This begins by recognizing Christ as the only wonderful Counselor. He becomes our model. We not only make Him Lord over our lives, but also over our clinical education and practice. We look to Him as our clinical supervisor who oversees all we hear and say in the counseling office.

Regardless of the theoretical orientation of our training (dynamic, cognitive, behavioral, object relations, eclectic, etc.) we need to place all we have learned about counseling from our education, training, and experience into the hands of Christ. Then, we can trust Him to help us apply our skills as we believe He wants us to in ministering to those who seek our help.

In each session we must make a conscious effort to see our counselees through our Lord's eyes and understand them through His heart and mind. This will help us better serve Him and them.

As we assume this spiritual posture, Christ enables us to become an effective conduit linking the heart and mind of our counselees with the heart and mind of Christ. When we are successful in this endeavor, the unlimited resources of His wisdom, power, and grace divinely augment our training and experience in the counseling process, bringing it to a new level. In this spiritually enriched environment, the power of God breaks the bondages of our counselees, heals their hurts, and provides the guidance they need in resolving other issues in their lives.

Without a conscious effort on our part to invoke this divine dimension into the counseling process, we limit the help we can give our counselees to whatever professional skills that have grown out of our education, training, and experience. As you can see, God is challenging each of us to discover ways of consciously acknowledging Christ's involvement in our relationship with our counselees.

In my practice, I remind myself at the beginning of each session that Christ is in the counseling office with the counselee and me. He knows the counselees the way I need to know them. He knows how to motivate them to use their pain as stepping-stones that can lead them from where they are to where He knows they can be.

Entering each session I try to be aware of my need of a spiritual awareness that will allow the Lord to share this information with me. This is my goal. I also end each session by praying that the Lord will help me serve this person (or couple) the way He wants me to serve them. I ask Him to help me be to them what He wants me to be. This keeps me aware of my limitations and reminds me of my dependence on the Lord for guidance.

Such a prayer also focuses the attention of the counselee on Jesus as his primary source of help. This lessens the tendency for the counselee to form an unhealthy dependency on me and encourages him to build a healthy dependency on Jesus.

Any serious effort to make counseling truly Christian will also involve a careful look at the way Christ went about His counseling ministry.

HOW DID CHRIST APPROACH COUNSELING?

The Gospels clearly indicate *compassion* was the dominant characteristic of Christ's counseling ministry. At least 14 times in the New Testament the writers used some form of the word *compassion* to describe Christ's interaction with people.

What is compassion? It is the ability to put yourself, as nearly as possible, in another person's place. Compassionate counselors are tender toward counselees and responsive to their needs. In their mind, they reverse roles with the counselee. They use the information they have gathered about the counselee to imagine what it would be like to be them in their situation.

Christ's compassion is obvious in His dealings with the woman at the well in John 4 and the woman caught in adultery in John 8. Jesus did not condone the multiple marriages of the woman He met at the well nor did He sanction the relationship she had with the man she was living with who had not bothered to marry her. Neither did he approve of the adultery of the woman in John 8. Nevertheless, He was sensitive and tender in His approach to these women.

Jesus often condemned the self-righteousness of the Pharisees. They were not among His favorite people. However, when Nicodemus sought Christ's help (John 3), Jesus was compassionate in His dealings with him, even though Nicodemus was a Pharisee.

Another prominent characteristic of Christ's counseling is what I call *lovingconfrontation*. For example, even though her multiple marriages and her current common-law relationship were delicate issues, Jesus confronted the woman at the well about them by asking her to go call her husband.

He also acknowledged the sinful state of the woman taken in adultery, by charging her to go and sin no more. Jesus reminded Nicodemus of the difference between natural birth and spiritual birth confronting him with the need to be born again.

Jesus always found a way to lovingly confront people with the truth. He was never rude or insensitive to those who were honest enough to confess their sins and admit their need of His help. He would not allow them, however, to avoid the issues that brought them to Him.

Both compassion and loving confrontation are necessary in helping people face the difficult circumstances and painful relationships in their lives. Christian counselors need to continually ask the Lord to expand these graces in their lives.

HOW IS THE HOLY SPIRIT INVOLVED IN COUNSELING?

In John 14:26 Jesus said, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

The Holy Spirit is a teacher. He will not only bring to our remembrance the teachings of Christ, but He will also bring to our remembrance things we need to recall about our counselees.

The Holy Spirit will also take the things we have learned from the social sciences and teach us how to translate them into a higher realm of spiritual insight. Specifically, if we have an ear to hear what the Spirit says, He will teach us how to take what we have learned about human development, mental illness, diagnosis, and counseling techniques to a new level.

At the same time the Holy Spirit is functioning in the mind of the counselor He is also at work in the mind of the counselee. In John 16:8 Jesus says, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (KJV). As you compassionately and lovingly confront the counselee with the circumstances that brought him to you, you can rely on the Holy Spirit to create uncomfortable levels of tension within the counselee that will motivate him to make the redemptive changes Jesus wants him to make to find the healing and deliverance he needs.

At the same time, you can count on the Holy Spirit to give you the inner strength necessary to tolerate increasingly intense levels of stress created by the counselee's conflicting attempts to simultaneously escape from and deal with his spiritual and emotional pain. Without the ability to deal with your own mounting levels of anxiety, your need for comfort may lead you to retreat from issues in the person's life that need to be pressed further. At that point the limits of your comfort level interfere with the mounting level of stress needed for motivating change in the counselee. Allowing the Holy Spirit to help you build your tolerance for rising levels of tension when facing difficult counseling moments will make you more effective in precipitating the redemptive changes Christ wants to bring to your counselees.

Remember, until the pain of remaining the same hurts more than the pain of change, people will prefer to remain the same. Intolerable levels of pain are essential in moving people from where they are to where the Lord wants them to be. Developing a higher tolerance for conflict and stress than your counselees will enable you to move them compassionately through the difficult season of life that prompted them to seek your help. During those uncomfortable moments in this process, it is comforting to know that people can deal with unpleasant certainty easier than they can deal with uncertainty. Successful counseling moves people through uncertainty to certainty.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE COUNSELING PROCESS

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are also valuable resources for the counselor, particularly for those who are Pentecostal or charismatic. In 1 Corinthians 12:7–12, the apostle Paul defines three sets of spiritual gifts. Gifts of the mind include the word of wisdom, word of knowledge, and discerning of spirits. There are verbal gifts: diverse kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy. Finally, there are the power gifts: faith, working of miracles, and gifts of healing. All of these gifts supernaturally enrich counseling.

First Corinthians 12–14 deals with the orderly manifestation of these gifts in public worship and in the believer's private life. A biblical understanding of how these gifts function in the counseling relationship can enable us to be more effective counselors.

Discerning spirits

The gifts of the mind can greatly enhance the diagnostic process. A trained clinician develops skill in using visual, auditory, and tactile senses in diagnosing a person's problems. When the gift of discerning of spirits becomes a part of this process, it takes your diagnostic skill to a new level.

The secular approach to counseling sees a person's current mental activity as the natural outgrowth of the interaction between and among his personal history, the present circumstances of his life, and the neurochemical processes of his brain. There is no acknowledgment of any spiritual or supernatural impact on this process.

Although Christian counselors acknowledge the important role these natural elements play in a person's mental activity, we believe one's spirit largely drives the mental process. Thinking is *always* spiritual warfare.

In 1 Corinthians 6:19,20 Paul makes it clear that the purpose of the body is to express the presence of God on earth.

In Romans 6,7, however, Paul acknowledges the powerful role sin plays in attempting to make our body the servant of evil. In Romans 6:16 he states our human dilemma, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (KJV).

At the same time that eternal life is stimulating the mind to entertain urges, fantasies, and ideas that would result in an expression of divine life, sin is stimulating the mind to entertain urges, fantasies, and ideas that will result in the expression of evil. The human will is caught in the middle of this struggle.

The will determines the expression of the mind or spirit as choices are transmitted through the brain to be expressed in the body. By observing the attitudes and behavior expressed through a person's body you can determine the spiritual influence that is winning the battle for the person's will.

The gift of discerning of spirits is a valuable tool for the Christian counselor for helping understand the current status of the counselee's spiritual battle. The clinician does not set aside his skills in this process; rather, the Holy Spirit augments them.

A word of knowledge

Excellent clinicians become experts in joining the dots of a person's history to get the picture the person presents. However, a word of knowledge from the Holy Spirit about the person amplifies these skills. Such a word often makes its way into the mind of the counselor as an intuition or hunch.

This is why a counselor needs to exercise care in determining how and when he introduces such a word to the counselee. The counselor should never impose this word of knowledge on the counselee. Presenting it as a suggestion gives the counselee an opportunity to accept it or reject it.

A word of wisdom

Anyone counseling people knows there are critical moments in your care of them. As a counselor, you acquire a natural wisdom for managing times like these. However, the Christian counselor is not limited to the natural wisdom that comes from experience.

James reminds us that wisdom is available from God to those who are humble enough to ask for it. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all liberally" (James 1:5, NKJV).[1]

However, there is a special word of wisdomthat the Holy Spirit can give us in clinical moments when we need His guidance. It alters what we would normally say or do. In retrospect, we easily recognize its divine origin by the healing impact its implementation has on the counselee.

Tongues, interpretation, and prophecy

These verbal gifts put at the counselor's disposal a level of fluency beyond his natural ability. This is especially helpful in disciplining and directing the counselor's dialogue with the counselee.

The private gift of speaking in other tongues also provides the Pentecostal or charismatic counselor a delightful means of debriefing himself after each session. During this time he can release tensions and stress from previous sessions to the Lord that would be difficult to articulate. He may also use this personal gift to make intercession for his counselees according to the will of God (Romans 8:26,27).

Faith, working of miracles, and gifts of healing

According to Hebrews 11:1, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (KJV). If counselors are to be effective, they must be people of faith. Even secular counselors must be able to inspire hope in people.

Notice the relationship between faith and hope. Faith grows out of hope. One of the early priorities of the counseling process is to inspire hope in the counselee. Hope inspired by the Holy Spirit can give birth to a gift of faith that enables both counselor and counselee to believe that the recovery hoped for will become a reality.

On rare occasions there is a divine breakthrough that goes beyond faith and hope — a miracle. Years ago, I remember seeing a missionary family from the Solomon Islands. Late one night four drunken Islanders invaded their house and terrorized the family in every imaginable way until daybreak.

Within 3 days they were at EMERGE. What they did not know was that a year before this tragedy God had brought a Christian children's psychiatrist from communist Albania to be there for their children. The communist government paid her family's travel expenses and the money necessary for her Christian training. These missionary's children responded well to therapy. Today they are both serving God.

Things like this do not happen often. That is why we call them miracles.

In addition, the Holy Spirit distributes gifts of healing to our counselees. Although, as Christian counselors we play our part in the process of bringing people to healing, we recognize the gift of healing that comes to our counselees is from the Holy Spirit — not from us. Christ-centered counseling requires more than devoted Christians who are expertly trained in the fields of professional counseling. It is the infusion of the

presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit into the counseling process that makes Christian counseling Christ-centered.

CHAPTER 9 the Goal of Christian Counseling

The foundation of Christian counseling which is based on bible teachings is guided by the American Association of Christian Counseling Code of Ethics. Christian counselors therefore study the bible as a helpful, insightful, and informative tool which can effectively be used to offer counseling services to people. According to Dr. Crabb, the Christian approach to problems is categorized as those resulting from either natural or physical causes like chemical imbalance or disabilities. The other category mainly consist moral problems. The Christian counseling approach believes that the bible speaks meaningfully to every area in human life.

The bible principles give a sufficient comprehensive and a meaningful guide on facts about human personalities which enables Christian counselors to understand the dynamic approach of integrating theology and physiology. Unlike professional secular psychology which has no biblical principles tied to it, Christian counseling is basically based on scriptural understanding of human interaction with the environment. Christian counseling is therefore recognized as a redemptive and restorative work based on Christian faith. The counselors work to reconcile their clients with God to enable them find personal significance and meaning in their relationship with Christ. The reconciliation thus facilitates restoration of clients to both human and environmental relationships.

The key goals of Christian counseling therefore includes; exploring client's problems, purpose, significance, and personal longings. It also aims to establish meaningful Christian relationship between clients. This also is important in creating peace between God, man, and the environment. Christian counseling also aims to develop a wholesome emotional wellbeing, biblical self-worth, thinking, and positive behavioral experience.

On the other hand, American Counseling Association (ACA) aims to promote the development of professional counselors to enhance quality of life in the society. It also advances the counseling profession through the use of professional counseling practice to promote the respect and diversity for human dignity. ACA reinforces the significance of personal professional development through its mission which clarifies the ethical counseling responsibilities.

The mission defines and establishes ethical expectations of each member and guides on developing counseling methods which are based on human values and ethics. In addition, the mission provides ways of dealing with inquiries and ethical complaints during counseling process. Generally, ACA is concerned with the importance of counselor's roles in relation to defined ethical standards. Although Christian counseling observe ACA ethical standards, it also includes a list of seven biblical foundations which encourage excellence and reinforce integrity in Christian counseling practice.

Basic Strategies

In the counseling strategies, ACA conducts its work through a systematic eight stages that involves; the introduction of counseling issues and the relationship between the client and the professional counselor. Privacy and confidentiality and privileged communication is a part of professional training and is highly regarded in ACA. Confidentiality is an ethical concept which aims to foster trust. Client's information is not allowed to be shared to third party unless an agreement is reached between both parties; this remains

the responsibility of professional counselor as defined in the code of conduct. Privileged communication is a legal concept which protects clients from being forced to disclose confidential information to their counselors. The evaluation and assessment of information is professionally conducted in ACA. This is used to generate information which can be used to supervise, train, and teach clients how to overcome their challenges.

ACA strategies also provide legal measures for resolving ethical issues. Similarly under Crabb's theory, the association of Christian Counselors is based on both legal and ethical standards including; competence in Christian teaching, informed consent on information shared with strict regard to privacy and confidentiality. It also involves ethical practice in evaluating counseling activities including advertising and public relations. The ethical and legal strategies explore the rights of both client and counselor and how they are protected. They also give a solid legal guidance in area of personal preservation in terms of information shared and relational boundaries which ensures openness, effective communication, and respect for building a meaningful client-counselor relationship. In both Crabb's Christian counseling and ACA, ethical standards offering guidance concerning fees, dual relationship, client autonomy and termination of counseling process in fairly similar.

Both Christian counseling and ACA agrees on the establishment of advance fees payments. All payment policies and procedures must be revealed early in time while any non-payment of fees or subsidies disclosed upon initiating therapy. In both cases, counseling services are offered even if clients are unable to pay fees and a later action plan is negotiated on how to raise the bill after termination of the process. The Christian counseling prefers pro bono work option by such client and encourages sliding scale fee. This is because both ACA and Christian counseling work are motivated by the need to have a society where people enjoy high quality of life. However fundamental differences regarding divorce, abortion, and confidentiality exist since Christian counselors have the responsibility to maintain biblical values and expose Christ in their counseling. However, like in ACA, their views and personal beliefs must not be imposed on clients. In Crabb's Christian counseling, conflicts in values can cause proper termination of the process.

Based on conflicts of interest, ACA code of ethics Section A.5 states that inappropriate relationship between clients and counselors is prohibited but only allowed after five years of nonprofessional interaction. Counselors are required to demonstrate in written form whether their interaction can be viewed as exploitive or if it still poses potential harm to former clients. Such interactions are only allowed if they finally benefit client based on their problem descriptions. This ensures that the welfare of clients and the integrity of the counseling agency are protected.

In Christian counseling, nonprofessional interaction is only allowed after two years or more after the counseling process has been terminated. In case of romantic relationship between client and counselor, Christian counseling strictly follow biblical values relationships and thus only allow marriage. Section C.5 of ACA code of ethics also protects client and counselor against discrimination based on age, sex, culture, ethnicity, disability, spirituality, sexual orientation, language, socio-economic, or marital status. The rights of both parties are therefore protected and respected unless the decisions are intentionally harmful to others. However, issues of sexual orientation, abortion, or marital affairs are held to the highest level of confidentiality and remains client's rights to choose.

ACA therefore don't discriminate any client cases as long as right decisions are made by the right parties. In Christian counseling, sanctity of life is highest regarded value, as a result certain issues like abortion or assisted suicide are not condoned. Although Christian counseling encourage openness to diverse client needs and their autonomy, Christian counselors are not compelled to compromise biblical values and beliefs. As a result client cases which cause serious conflicts of interests are usually referred to other center like ACA which offer such services.

Basic Concepts

The basic concept of Crabb's theory of counseling is the idea that human being has one basic need for personal worth which can be achieved in two ways. Personal significance which is the need for purpose, meaningfulness or impact is the first input that must be satisfied. The second input to achieve a personal worth is the need for security which is defined as continual expression of unconditional love and permanent acceptance. Crabb's concepts therefore view that personal problems result from trying to achieve these needs without God.

As a result Christian counseling is viewed to be dealing with man in totality; spiritually, mentally, physically, and emotionally. Unlike the professional ACA counseling, Christian counseling is strongly associated with Pastoral responsibilities and cares and may include using prayers as healing method to help people overcome their problems. In contrast, ACA counseling scientifically study psychology and nature of individual problems and based on their research findings offer appropriate therapy. Crabb defines three models of Christian counseling; behavioral model emphasizes the behavior modification through Spiritual works within man. This concept states that every man called by God has basic supernatural gifts of biblical counseling and therefore requires no training to offer counseling. Behavioral concept of Christian counseling requires that clients completely commit their problems to God for solutions.

Cognitive model in Christian Counseling allows combination of mental health professionals like in ACA as well as psychological insights in counseling to increase the effectiveness of the process. Although the concept integrates secular approach in its methodology, it still regards influence of the Holy Spirit as the core for overcoming human challenges. The Freudian model believes that human problems are as a result of past experiences. This is contrary to ACA which argues that human problems results from present interaction with the immediate environment while others could be inherited. Freudian model in Christian counseling can be in the form of Theophostic counseling where God's healing power is invoked by a counselor through to heal haunting past traumas.

Despite differences in concepts, both Christian and ACA share principles that clients need meaning and hope in their lives and must regard their present life both significant and meaningful to be able to achieve happiness and overcome problems.

CONCLUSION

Counseling as a distinct discipline of the social sciences has existed for only a few decades. It has, however, been a basic Christian concern since the birth of the church, and many passages in both the Old and the New Testament describe counseling relationships. The pastoral care movement, which came into its own in the forties and has experienced rapid expansion, attempts to integrate the biblical mandates of interpersonal responsibility and the burgeoning insights of the social sciences.

Today marriage breakdown and family deterioration are giving further impetus to the need for responsible Christian counseling. Many pastors are experiencing such overwhelming demands on their time for marriage and family counseling that their administrative and preaching assignments suffer. Indeed, many have seen this aspect of ministry as so significant that they have left the parish ministry and entered into full-time counseling practices.

But how shall a counselor counsel? Many models of counseling are being proposed by various psychological schools of thought. Names such as Rogers, Freud, Perls, Glasser, Mowrer, Satir, and many others are increasingly part of the counseling vocabulary. However, other voices, voices of Christians, are also beginning to be heard. Men such as Howard Clinebell, Jay Adams, Lawrence Crabb, John Marten, etc., are seeking to define the meaning of Christian counseling. But here, too, the approaches vary considerably, and the pastoral counselor may well be at a loss which one he should adopt.

This article will chart answers to the following questions: What should be the Christian counselor's relationship to the social sciences? How can one assume a responsible counseling role? What about our view of persons and counseling? What does the Gospel have to do with the counseling relationship? *{24}*

RESPONSIBILITY AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Almost everyone has been exposed to the insights and approaches of the social sciences. Psychology (often with a capital P) pervades every area of our educational experience. Some Christian counselors have completely accepted current psychological insights into their counseling practice without critical assessment, whereas others have resolutely attempted to reject whatever the social sciences have to offer.

John D. Carter has outlined four ways to relate Scripture and psychology, particularly as they impinge on counseling philosophies.[1] The first is Scripture against psychology. Here the underlying assumption is that revelation is against reason. Soteriology and the Fall are given such prominence that there is no room for creation and providence. All necessary mental health principles are contained in the Scriptures. Thus the responsibility of the counselor consists essentially of only three tasks: 1) identify the specific problem in the case; 2) search for the biblical principles that apply to the case; and 3) bring these principles to bear upon the case in order to understand and solve the problem.[2]

The opposite extreme places psychology above Scripture. Human reason is considered more basic and comprehensive than revelation so that creation and providence pre-empt soteriology and the Fall. The basic principles of emotional health have been discovered by psychology, and there is little or no need for the Bible. The application of these principles with the help of a therapist will lead to the resolution of emotional problems.

A third position is to consider Scripture and psychology as parallels. This viewpoint tends to view revelation and science as two distinct and irreconcilable systems. Creation-providence and soteriology are both stressed but they belong to different categories. Hence a person with emotional problems would seek the help of a psychologist or psychotherapist and the person with spiritual problems would go to a pastor.

The fourth position seems to reflect a certain maturity in the Christian counseling movement. This is an attempt to integrate psychology and Scripture. Lawrence Crabb identifies his own struggle in coming to terms with psychological systems as a Christian counselor:

I determined that my belief in Scripture was rational and firm…and that my psychological theory and practice would have to conform to biblical truth.… The more I read the more difficult it became to block out the impression that, with a few rewarding exceptions, humanistic psychology was not being *replaced* by *{25}* Christianity but rather integrated with certain biblical ideas.[3] (Italics mine)

The integrational approach is based on the assumption that both revelation and creation originate in God. Hence all truths, whether from the special revelation of Scripture or from the general revelation of creation, are from God and must be integrated into the whole. Both soteriology-Fall and creation-providence must receive due attention. Although all personal problems are the result of the Fall in principle, they are not always the result of conscious (responsible) acts.

The responsible Christian counselor must then take all that God has given him with utmost seriousness. Truths from the social sciences, which derive their insights from a study of man (i.e. creation), must be used when they meet the test of Scripture. To reject them out of hand because they are not specifically found in the Bible is as irresponsible as to reject the doctrine of the Holy Spirit because it is not recognized by the psychologists.

RESPONSIBILITY AND COUNSELING ROLES

The definition of counseling roles has also troubled many Christian counselors. In most instances our assumed role reflects the training we have received or the latest book we have read on the subject. To achieve responsibility in this area we are again called upon to assess the knowledge that is available and submit it to the test of the Scriptures.

One of the best-known counseling role models, and the one with the longest history, is Rogerian or client-centered therapy. This approach dominated the entire pastoral counseling movement in the forties and fifties and is still much used today. Rogerian counseling is based on Freudian psychoanalytic psychology. Its emphasis is on achieving insight and casts the counselor in a rather passive role. The assumption is that new self-perceptions and changes in feeling will also lead to new behavior. The individual is viewed as having all the necessary power within himself for renewal and change. It assumes that emotional disorders most frequently stem from unconscious motivation and have their roots in childhood experiences. Although few Christian counselors would accept the underlying psychoanalytic philosophy of Rogerian counseling, there are emphases, such as listening and responding to feelings, which treat the counselee in a wholistic manner and merit our attention.

Almost in direct contrast to the Rogerian role model is that of the directive counselor. Generally speaking, this style cannot easily be identified with a unified psychological system. O. Hobart Mowrer probably comes closest to it in his method of identifying the sin of the *{26}* client, confronting him with it, and insisting on repentance and restoration as the only approach to healing and growth.

The directive counseling role seems most compatible with the conservative evangelical counselor. The general operational assumption seems to be that the client is weak, helpless and, of course, sinful. The counselor, on the other hand, has the truth on his side, the Word of God. Therefore, he has not only the opportunity, but the responsibility, to identify the problem, establish the appropriate Scripture, and inform the client of what he must do. Adams says simply, "Because it is authoritative, biblical counseling is directive."[4] Certainly there is no argument with the premise that the Bible is authoritative. However, the conclusion does not necessarily follow. It would be comparable to say that since I as a parent have authority over my child, therefore I must always be authoritarian.

How can the Christian counselor be responsible in the role that he assumes? Does he have to choose between the non-directive and the directive approach? One of the problems of both of these role models is that the person of the counselor is largely disregarded. He remains insignificant, almost a non-entity. In the non-directive approach the client is everything and the counselor is little more than a mirror of the feelings and ideas of the counselee. In the directive approach the Scripture is everything and both the client and the counselor are of little consequence. This does not seem to be in keeping with the relational emphasis of the Scriptures. Responsible Christian counseling demands that both the counselor and the client receive due attention and respect.

A growing recognition of the significant role of the counselor has been accompanied by a shift from doing to being. Now the counselor does not begin by asking what he must *do* (or know, or say). He begins, rather, by asking, "What must I *be* to be of real help to the person?"[5] In projecting the new person-centered emphasis of counseling, Howard Clinebell suggests that,

The new model is "relationship-centered" in that the pastor views his relationship with the counselee as an important part of the counseling…the pastor is free to reveal his own humanity.… Experiencing healthy relationships is important for the personal growth of the counselee. The pastor recognizes his rightful authority and, when necessary, uses it to guide, teach, encourage, or confront.[6]

The first and primary responsibility for the Christian counselor in choosing a role model is that he give attention to himself as a Christian and to the quality of the relationship which he establishes between himself and the counselee. The impact of the Scriptures will first come *{27}* to the client through the person of the counselor, not through quoted Bible verses. David Carlson, in an article dealing with role models says,

Ideally, the range of therapeutic responses represents a person's professional role and personality so that the counselor does not merely act out a particular helping role but actually possesses the attitudes and feelings of that role.[7]

A study of the biblical materials relating to the counseling roles of Jesus provides adequate evidence that no one role (as directive versus non-directive) is adequate. Jesus assumed a variety of roles in his

relationship to different people.[8] These included the prophetic, the pastoral, and the priestly roles, and he exercised them in a continuous, not in the dichotomous, fashion. The prophetic role includes preaching, teaching, confronting, and calling for repentance. Nurturing, protecting, supporting, encouraging, and calling the lost reflect the pastoral role. The priestly role involves listening, forgiving, sensitivity to feelings, mediating, and calls for confession.

The point of this discussion is that when we opt for any one role exclusively in our counseling relationships and then stereotype that role as the only "biblical" one, we can easily be un-Christian in our relationship with the client. Role rigidity (the unwillingness to switch roles according to the needs of the client) may simply be a reflection of the inflexibility of the personality of the counselor.

Carlson derives the following conclusions from his study of the various roles assumed by Jesus:[9]

Therapeutic role integration is possible when one takes into consideration the whole counsel of God.

One can "know" what the problems and the solutions are and still be willing to listen.

A counselor can be authoritative without being authoritarian.

One can be right without having to demand that the counselee accept and recognize the person's rightness.

Confrontations and interpretations (as well as other roles) must be timed according to the need of the client. The person who assumes only the directive role is in danger of not listening, of jumping to conclusions, and of speaking the words of the Lord before the person is ready to listen. By the same token, the non-directive pastor faces the pitfall of not sharing the Gospel, not speaking words of comfort, and not offering forgiveness and healing. *{28}*

RESPONSIBILITY AND OUR VIEW OF MAN

Different views of man are implied in different counseling models. The client-centered therapist assumes that all the potential for healing, change, and growth reside within the person. Directive counseling reflects the total helplessness of man, his sinfulness, and his lack of strength to help himself. Help comes only from the therapist (through his sharing of the truth) and from God. This latter view heightens the client's dependency and further weakens his sense of responsibility. He tends to think, "You tell me what I must do and how to do it, and then I will change."

We require another look at the biblical view of man. Man is created in the image of God. He is a person as God is personal. He is a social creature, created for fellowship with God and with his fellow creatures. God's assessment of the individual human condition is "that it is not good that man should be alone." But man is also fallen, a sinful creature, with innate tendencies to rebel against God. The result is that separation from God is part of the human conditions. But the Bible teaches further that God is at work through His Holy Spirit in the life of unregenerate and regenerate persons. The Holy Spirit convicts sinful man of sin, righteousness, and judgment, whereas He empowers Christians to walk in the Spirit.

A responsible view of man acknowledges the continuing work of the Spirit in his life and recognizes that man assumes responsibility for his own spiritual destiny. Recent counseling trends have emphasized this aspect of responsibility in the therapeutic relationships. Adams acknowledges this important concept when he points out that one of the consequences of sin is that man begins to shift the blame for his own actions to others.[10] David Augsburger reflects concerning personal feeling: "I discover that as I own it, accepting full responsibility, I am then able to respond in new ways. I become response-able."[11]

Many counselees keep trying to place blame on the other person: "She makes me angry;" "He is trying to ruin my life;" "She always puts me down;" "He doesn't have any respect for me." A responsible attitude toward persons will help them to recognize that each of us must assume responsibility for our actions, our feelings, and our decisions. No one has the power to make us angry, or to hate, or to be jealous. Our responses to various situations and persons are our own responsibility. God holds us accountable.

Lawrence Crabb entitles a chapter, "Hold Your Client Responsible: For What?" and correctly points out that the danger exists that such an approach may well promote effort in the power of the flesh.[12] We can

only hold the counselee responsible for that which he can {29} control. But we must again indicate our basic assumption that the Holy Spirit is at work in us to help us both "to will and to do of his good pleasure." Christian counseling becomes more than just the sharing of biblical maxims as guides for behavior along with authoritative encouragement to comply.

Certainly all good counselors, Christians included, agree that "Bible-beating" a client with various Scriptures and giving him the biblical 'answers' do not facilitate growth in either the counselor, client or the relationship between them.[13]

Counseling must become an encounter between the client and the counselor and through the counselor, an encounter between the client and God. Our task is to enhance this encounter and help the client to understand that he must carry the responsibility of the response.

Perhaps at no other point do secular and Christian philosophies of counseling separate ways so sharply as in the belief in the work of the Holy Spirit. Christians are aware that they can tap into a spiritual, supernatural, source of Divine power which is at work in both counselor and counselee. A responsible view of persons in the Christian counseling relationship must, therefore, recognize the sinful nature of man, encourage him to assume responsibility for his feelings and behavior, and together with him rely on the power of the Holy Spirit for changes in his life. This reliance is not an avoidance technique since God does not overwhelm us and force us into His mold; rather he works with us and heightens our powers as we decide to follow him. Paul Barkman says that "It is impossible to support from the Bible the idea that when the Holy Spirit guides a person he is less intellectually keen, perceptive and oriented to reality than when he is not divinely guided."[14]

RESPONSIBILITY AND THE GOSPEL

The Gospel of Jesus Christ should be at the heart of every counseling relationship. Much of religious counseling, however, tends to be condemnatory rather than an offer of grace and forgiveness. We bring the counselee face to face with the biblical standards that he has not attained, the religious mores that he has broken, or the Christian ideals that he ought to achieve. And then we congratulate ourselves because we feel that we have once more been true to the Bible. But the client that comes to us seeking help is usually deeply aware of his sin along with an enduring sense of failure, guilt, frustration, and discouragement. What he needs most at this point is not judgment but grace, not law but the Gospel. To the sin-ridden Corinthian church, Paul says, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:3). {30}

Many approaches which aim at the removal of guilt are inadequate for Christian counselors. Psychoanalysts have tended to resolve this problem by shifting the blame to unconscious motivations and childhood experiences of the past. Behaviorists will readily call attention to the determinism of the external environment. Others may seek to excise guilt by an act of the will. All these will fail. There are two ways to remove guilt: one is to pay for our sins and the second is to seek forgiveness from someone with the authority to grant it, namely, God. To be responsible as a Christian counselor, my task is to share the Gospel, the Good News that God in Christ is willing to forgive. We must offer this release to the captives. In the economy of the divine kerygma we always have another chance. By being forgiving as counselors and by evidencing a non-judgmental attitude, we will be responsible toward the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This will open the doors to an acceptance of the One who offers us love and grace and enables us to effect the changes necessary for growing relationships.

The problem of having a judgmental attitude and of imposing values on the counselee is closely related to our attempt to share the Gospel. Almost uniformly counselors are taught not to be judgmental, not to impose their values on the client, but to be supportive and accepting. The assumption is that the client must experience freedom of choice in developing his own values and in making decisions about his life. This is best accomplished in a climate of love and concern. Paul Tournier has pointed out that judgment is always destructive.[15]

At the same time, we recognize that it is impossible for a significant relationship to exist without the reciprocal influence of values. The Bible also reflects this tension when on the one hand we are instructed not to pass judgment on another person and on the other we are encouraged to confront, to teach, and to advise. Our Christian values, our Christian personhood, will impinge with judgment upon others in the counseling relationship. We do not condone sinful living. At the same time our attitudes, our willingness to listen and to forgive, will extend a message of grace.

Counseling is an expression of human values and human attitudes, and as the counselor is working and relating and experiencing with another person, he is giving a fairly clear picture of his own personal philosophical concept of man, his nature and his function on this earth.[16]

We must therefore conclude that the first level of sharing the Gospel has to do with the person of the counselor as a Christian. The first answer to the question, "In what way are you a Christian counselor?" is not by sharing an outline of our counseling methods, but rather with the affirmation, "By being Christian in the counseling relationship." *{31}* Our first act of love, sharing the message of the Gospel, will be our non-judgmental attitude and relationship with the client. Our values, the quality of our relationship, our total being will be a significant level at which we share the message of God's love.

A second level of responsibility towards the Gospel has to do with the nature and quality of dialogue that is carried on between the counselor and his client. Self-disclosure of the humanity of the counselor can open the encounter to the experience of God. A look at the Apostle Paul shows that he wept, he rejoiced, he was angry, and he was frustrated, all of which he shared with his readers. Dialogue, both verbal and non-verbal, opens the doors to communication and to the presence of God. "When we seek one another in honest exchange, we find ourselves also in communion with God."[17] As we establish loving and caring communion with each other, God enters in. It is instructive that the heated dialogue recorded in Acts 15 resulted in the conclusion that the Spirit had, in fact, been in their midst and exercised His divine influence upon their difficult decision.

When man is open to both man and God, miracles happen. But they are forged out of everyday events, the happenings between persons: the conflicts, failures, misunderstandings and tragedies of living together, as well as out of the love and acceptance that are both the source and environment for the miracle of dialogue.

Paul exhorts us to speak the truth in love (Eph. 5:15). This "truth" includes the truth of persons and their need, the truth of the counselor as a person, and the truth of the Gospel which is transmitted in loving relationships.

Responsible Christian counseling also includes the sharing of content, the message of hope and forgiveness. This message, however, must be given in the context of the authenticity of the person of the counselor and the caring quality of the relationship. Then we will be able to say with Paul, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

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"Ministering God's Word" in counseling means to exhort, apply, teach, and rebuke (2 Tim 4:2, Acts 6:2-4). It is using God's word to implement God's promises and principles in order to help a person deal with sin and trials, pointing them to God's redemptive power and love in Christ. See also, Jay Adams, Critical Stages in Biblical Counseling (Hackettstown, NJ: Timeless Texts, 2002) 151.

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